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SUBJECT: Brazil: Obama's Victory Unleashes Outpouring of  
Enthusiasm and Hope

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Official statements and media reactions to the election of Barack Obama have been overwhelmingly positive, and political and opinion leaders have expressed hopes that the already good bilateral relationship will improve. Brazilians elites have high expectations that Obama will show more understanding in his regional policies, that U.S. policy on Cuba will change, and that Obama will deal effectively with the global financial crisis. Some, however, seem to realize that their expectations are not likely to be met fully. President Bush's name is generally absent from the discussion, but many statements criticize current USG policies. Brazilians, whose admiration for American democracy and culture is enduring and strong, seem anxious to rekindle their love affair with the U.S. and are in a mood to give Obama a long honeymoon. End summary.

President Lula's Congratulations

¶2. (U) on November 5 President Lula issued this statement:

In the name of the Brazilian people and myself, I congratulate you on your election as president of the United State of America. Your victory represents an historic moment of achievement for the U.S., which has proved once again the transformative capacity of its democracy and society. You knew how to transmit a vision of the future, leadership capability and the certainty that hope is stronger than fear.

Your choice by the American people comes at a particularly favorable moment in Brazilian-U.S. relations. It happens, also at the crossroads of complex challenges for the international order intensified by the seriousness of the financial crisis that directly affects millions of persons throughout the world.

I am certain that under your leadership the U.S. will respond to those challenges inspired by the 'intense urgency of the present' that Martin Luther King demanded.

I am sure, too, that the U.S. and Brazil will continue to improve our excellent relationship, which is guided by mutual respect, historical ties, and common values and goals.

Lula: Obama's Election Is Possible Only in a Real Democracy

¶3. (U) At a November 5 joint congressional session commemorating

the 20th anniversary of the Brazilian constitution, Lula declared that "the election of Barack Obama to the presidency of the United States can only be possible in a country that has democracy...It is a reason to be happy, and few times in U.S. history has a president aroused so much interest in his being elected...I hope there will be an improvement in relations between Brazil and the U.S., and a [U.S.] policy more aimed toward the development of our beloved Latin America. I hope a way out will be found for the conflict in the Middle East...just as I hope the blockade against Cuba will be ended because there is no political explanation for still having a blockade against Cuba. So we, as Brazilians, are happy with the election, and we will be much happier still if relations between the U.S. and our continent are improved."

#### Congressional Reactions

14. (U) Senate President Garibaldi Alves Filho (PMDB - Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, a non-ideological party in the government coalition; of Rio Grande do Norte), said on November 5 that Obama's election demonstrated that the Republican policies were "wrong and interventionist," and the new president would seek better relations not only with Latin America but the whole world. He said that the world is witnessing not the realization of a dream, but an extraordinary change, and added that he hoped Obama will defeat the financial crisis. Obama's victory, said Alves, will represent a change not only in the U.S., but in the whole world: "No one will remain indifferent to what the victory of a black man [elected] to the U.S. presidency represented."

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15. (U) Speaking in the Senate plenary chamber on November 5, Senator Paulo Paim (PT-Workers' Party; lead party in the government coalition; of Rio Grande do Sul), the only self-identified black senator, called Obama's election "an almost revolutionary change," said it would be welcomed on all continents and by peoples of all ethnicities and religious creeds, and the U.S. was "daring and courageous." He described watching Obama's election on TV: "I saw it was a magic moment. I saw in Barack Obama a universal transformation in humanitarian policies. I see in Barack Obama the hope and dreams that another world is possible, where man, where the human being, is in first place." Several senators co-sponsored a congratulatory resolution that declared that Obama arose as a "bulwark of the political, economic, and social reforms needed in the U.S." On November 10, Paim again spoke of Obama in the plenary, saying, among other things, that Obama's election is a message to black children in the U.S. that it is possible to make it to the top.

16. (U) Other senators also made plenary speeches noting the positive significance of Obama's election, including Arthur Virgilio (PSDB, Amazonas), bench leader of the Social Democrats, who called Obama's election a "breath of good democratic oxygen...a great advance," and said Lula should make Obama aware that better relations require breaking down protectionist practices in the trade relationship. Senator Renato Casagrande (PSB - Brazilian Socialist Party, government; of Espirito Santo), his party's Senate bench leader, said Obama's election holds important symbolism for "those who still have reactionary positions." Another positive sign, he said, is the change in U.S. economic policy in "a country where the president developed a very conservative economic policy, without dialogue, without democracy, without internal debate, and now has turned toward a policy where society will be heard." He also said he expects less interference in the sovereignty of other states. Senator Magno Malta (PR - Party of the Republic, government; of Espirito Santo) characterized Obama's acceptance speech as "a pearl" that showed a man who was emotionally moved but well-balanced. Malta said the "euphoria of the poor" that he saw on TV reminded him of President Lula's election, when he also felt a great hope for better economic conditions for the disadvantaged. Senator Eduardo Suplicy (PT; of Sao Paulo) said on November 11 that Obama would soon "put an end to the wall that separates the U.S. from Mexico and the rest of Latin America."

#### Selected Media Reaction

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¶17. (U) Brazilian media gave Obama's election extensive and positive coverage; he was on the cover of major news magazines and major dailies published entire supplements about him in. Columnists and commentators wrote enthusiastic praise for Obama and the many meanings of his election. The comment by Zuenir Ventura, columnist for O Globo, on November 8 was typical. Obama's victory was "the beginning of the 21st century of our dreams, not of the Twin Towers...No one had broken so many taboos, brought down so many barriers and walls, and undone so many stereotypes...In times of anti-terror paranoia, he made people forget the polemics over his supposed Muslim family ties and he popularized a strange name that, evoking the sound of two enemies of the fatherland -- Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein - sounded suspect, almost a provocation. Weren't Americans famous for being lazy about voting? Well, he made everybody get out of the house and break voting records. Weren't young people apathetic and depoliticized? Well, he pulled them away from in front of the computer to help get him elected. We know that this is but little before the challenges he will have before him. It is not going to be easy to re-found an empire tired from war, in decline, and to reinstitute respect for a democracy that stained its image installing torture centers in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo...After he revolutionized the way to come to power, people expect Barack Obama to make a revolution in how he governs. And changing the U.S., he will change the world. 'Yes, we can,' was his promise."

¶18. (U) Merval Pereira, political columnist for Rio de Janeiro's O Globo, was among the few to strike a measured tone: he said on November 8 that President Lula is mistaken in thinking that Obama's

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election is part of a larger movement that originated in South America with the election of Hugo Chavez, Evo Morales and so on, and no one believes the region is going to become a priority for the U.S. as long as there is so much to attend to in the global economy and foreign affairs. Pereira recounts points from a post-election conversation with Antonio Patriota, Brazil's ambassador to the U.S. Patriota expects the bilateral relationship, already very vigorous, will become even stronger, and does not believe a Democratic congress will block an improvement in trade relations since it already approved the biofuels memorandum of understanding. Patriota also cited the CEO Forum and the Joint Action Plan Against Racial Discrimination as proof of ongoing programs of common bilateral interest, and said Brazil is not uncomfortable with the relationship with the U.S., pointing to Brazil's prestigious position with the U.S. as one of only a handful of strategic partners. Pereira also says analysts believe a turnabout in U.S. farm policy to be almost impossible because Obama promised to maintain farm subsidies.

¶19. (U) Folha de S. Paulo financial editor Sergio Malbergier wrote in his online column on November 5, "Obama is a global phenomenon; his victory reflects not only the choice of the majority of Americans, but the majority of human beings... One of the damning legacies of Bushism, perhaps the worst one, is an acute and stupid anti-Americanism... Americans could not have given a better answer to the world (and to Bushism) than to usher Michelle and Barack Obama into the White House. That does not mean that his outstanding electoral victory...will guarantee a happy ending to the sad record of George W. Bush in Washington... But the global satisfaction with the inspiring accomplishment by Obama gives some hope to a world that is slowing down, almost stagnant. Let's cheer Obama and what his impressive victory represents. Today, we are all Americans."

¶10. (U) Obama "carried the weight of the world" during his victory celebration, but responded with a "sober speech, in which he promised to unite the country and underscored the difficulties that lie ahead." Valor Economico, November 7.

¶11. (U) "Realistic hope" (editorial)  
"With each passing day, the expectation of those who voted for him rises, along with his responsibility in the face of the economic crisis... The Senator needs to start acting quickly... Arrogance and unilateralism are no longer pillars for decision making. They will by necessity be substituted by quick and pragmatic action. [The]

upcoming international conference to discuss ways out of the crisis... is Obama's first great opportunity. ...this moment of festive commotion surrounding his victory needs to be over quickly so that it can be remembered as an instant of happiness, and not the beginning of a collective delusion." Jornal do Brasil, November 7.

¶12. (U) Former Brazilian Ambassador to the U.S. Rubens Barbosa, like Merval Pereira, was among the realists trying to rein in expectations when wrote in an op-ed in Estado de S. Paulo on November 11 that "relations with Latin America and Brazil should not undergo any change. Latin America will continue to be off the radar screen of Washington decision-makers. Not representing a national security threat and not being an attractive area for investment, the area will remain a low priority in foreign policy...Brazil will continue to occupy a differentiated position as a privileged interlocutor of the U.S..." Barbosa saw in Obama's victory the end of the Reagan era and a voter response to new challenges such as the environment, human rights, and the mortgage crisis, strengthened by the mass participation of young and minority voters.

Comment: Great Expectations, Rekindled Admiration

¶13. (SBU) The enthusiasm from political leaders and media is an outpouring of genuine joy over the election of a mixed-race man in a country that, paraphrasing Secretary Rice, is more like Brazil than any other, a new world country of immigrant traditions and ethnic and racial diversity. Obama's victory gives Brazilians hope that their country, too, can also break down the last barriers to minority achievement. But we also see expressions of hope that U.S. policies will change and that the U.S. itself will become more pacific, more modest, and more conciliatory. Even many Brazilians realize that their great expectations are unrealistic: IstoE

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magazine asked on its latest cover "Can this man save America and the world?" and the headline on inside pages was "A redeemer in the White House?" Some commentators already see likely trouble spots - trade, Cuba, farm policy, as well as a failure make Brazil and Latin America a top priority - but Brazilians, whose admiration for American democracy and culture is enduring and strong, seem anxious to rekindle their love affair with the U.S. and are in a mood to give Obama a long honeymoon.

SOBEL